

# Alternative

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## LAST GOOD WAR

(This is the reaction of an *ALTERNATIVE* reader — not an "intellectual", pacifist, or socialist, but one of the many awakening, thinking people.)

I object to the atomic bomb, I most certionly do. My objection to the bomb is purely humanat-erian. I object to the invention of it and to the use of it because it De-humanises war, and war with out the human element can certainly never be satisfying to human beings. Of course you understand now I have absolutely no abjection to war because it is perfectly obvose that an occasional war is essensel to economic and phical heath of socioty.

Now take war in the days of the sword. ah there was war. Dressed in spland armer, amid the sighs of admiration from his loved ones, the solder would march off in a blase of glory. He would take his war sword to soord, man to man and if he retuned his was the sadisfaction of being a victor, and if he did not, then the satisfaction went to his family in the proud knowledge that that had given a solder to the nation. Eather way he couldn't lose.

### A-Bomb Spoils War

But today, in this age of socalled progress, with its atom bomb, a man might not even have time to get down to the recruiting office. He might be in the bathroom . . . shaving, or just punching the timeclock after work and boom, puff, he is no more.

I am very much afraid that we have had our last really satisfying war. In the future (short though it may be), men will look back at world war two and say "ah that was a great war. Mil-lion of men and michines slugging it out over the entire face of the earth. Man agenst man michine agenst michine. Of we know that all of those solders weren't inspired by patriotism, and the thirst for glory. A few were there for the security and good pay, but the veener of time will cover that, and our recent war will be in a remembered in a bueatiful nostilgia.

War of couse has been detiorating slowly over the past 500 years, But with the avend of th a bomb it becomes completely valueless. The ter-rable moral devastation that the bomb has created is all around us. Even our greatest and brav-est generals are suffering from feelings of in-fearority, and uselessness. The hint of this is to be found in the unpresadented corruption of some of our high miltery men as in the recent 5% scandle. Can one feel anything but pity for thies gallent generarls, who have devoted there

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## DOES YOUR MATE SATISFY YOU? IF NOT, SMOKE ABC'S

I doubt if even the manufacturers of Arthur Godfrey would claim that Chesterfields can ful-fill all the functions of a loving wife. But, they would probably claim so if they thought they could increase sales that way. Thousands of advertisements appear in the magazines and on the radio each day that are just as ridiculous. The only difference is that the lies are a little more subtle.

But the most dangerous advertising isn't in the commercials or the paid advertisements. It comes by way of the commentators and column-ists, the speechmakers and politicians, the schools and churches. It is the advertising which sells us America and the American Way.

This advertising is just as false — and unfor-tunately just as successful — as the commer-cial ads for particular brands of cigarettes, bras-sieres, and hair tonic.

Under certain circumstances we can still tell the difference between a cigarette and a human being (tho millions buy Chesterfields simply because they like Arthur, Bing, and whoever it is that the C stands for). But who can tell the difference between half a million people and a military objective? Who can tell the differ-ence between a democracy and the United States (and of those who can, how many can distinguish between a worker's republic and the Soviet Union?) Who can tell that there is *no* differ-ence between "being strong enough to defend the peace" and getting the equipment ready to destroy civilization?

Actually it is not a fault of our intellects. Most of us know, when challenged, that Luckies are not kind to our throats, armies don't preserve the peace, and there is no kind of brassiere which will find us the right husband. Similarly, who really believes that the people of America have democratic control over the things which most affect our daily lives?

The trouble seems to be that we are used to following the Biggest Noise, used to doing what we are told, used to yielding to social pressure. Even in such a fundamental thing as making love, we are more used to aping Hollywood than to developing natural human relationships in accord with our own feelings and affections. A generation ago many girls were afraid to express their affection by kissing. They were more loyal to the current puritanical taboos than to their own emotions. Today there is no lack of kissing,

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but the fundamental situation has not changed. Girls who are overanxious to kiss are still afraid to express love that way. Instead they concentrate on tilting their heads, whispering their words, and making with their eyes the way the movie actresses do in their latest pictures.

Seeing so much falseness in our society we can easily blame it on the Advertisers, the Militarists, Big Business, Hollywood — or any other Group external to ourselves. But the fault lies only partly there. The Advertisers couldn't sell their product by singing-commercials if we were not influenced by them. The Generals would have no one to lead to war if we did not yield to their propaganda — and if we had the guts to tell our neighbors that we were never going to fight in another war. A nation of mature people would bankrupt present Hollywood.

### Self-reliance Needed

As Emerson wrote (when the disease was less virulent):

"I am ashamed to think how easily we capitulate to badges and names, to large societies and dead institutions." . . . and

"a greater self-reliance . . . must work a revolution in all the offices and relations of men."

Self-reliance is perhaps the virtue most lacking in our society today. If we trusted ourselves more we would trust our "leaders" (and advertisers) less. But such self-reliance is not easily come by. It is not apt to come for the first time in the crises of life — such as when we find ourselves subject to a conscription law.

The roots of our lack of self-hood run deep into our homes, schools, churches, and recreational habits. But probably no area is more important than that of our daily work. We are used to factories and offices where some persons make the decisions and others carry them out. There is an unnatural and enervating separation of brain work from hand work. Both parties suffer, though differently, from the separation. It is hard to know which is worse — to spend the day making "important statements" into the dictaphone or to be the typist who must write another man's letters. Recently the office of the War Resisters League, national pacifist organization, was reorganized so that all of the employees share in both the executive functions and the menial ones. Now the "Executive Secretary" types his own letters and the position formerly filled by a stenographer is held by a girl who does clerical work but also writes "executive letters" in the name of the League.

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## LAST GOOD WAR

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lives to the art of war only to find that now in there old age, when they should be honored and respected, they are replaced by a handfull of sliderule tooting scientests.

And what is to become of the millions of young man the world over whose hearts are afire with patreatism, when they too realize that they may never aspire to the crex de gurria or the purple heart. Are they doomed to live the stifle lives of clark sodajerk and cowhard, never consummating there man hood in the jungle foxholes.

I expect any day now to read in the paper of a new super atom bomb. Those damm scinetest are probably staying awake nigts working on it now. Some evening you, or someone over there will tune in his radio to hear his favoish commetator say "ah there is news tonight, at 3: the western hemisphere declared war on us and at 3:6 we superatombombed them off the map (or versa vise.)

It is quite obvose that eventually this thing called progress will reach the point were itwill elimanate generalss and armies, heros and heroism will be passe. They will all be replaced by one little man, a scinetest of course and they will cal him the gardian of the atom or the portactor of the peace or some such thing. and he will be instulled in a reinforced concret and steel temple with one little red button to set off the last and greatest super duper atom bomb.

Then sooner or latter its sure to happin. Perhaps from sheer bordom, or curiosity (you know how curous thies damm scienests are). He'll press that lettlet button just to see if it really works.

Even assuming he is a man of colossal strength and will power there is always the element of forgetfulness. Imagion him awaking in the middle of the night and rising to perform some natural function. absentmndly he reaches for the light swith and . . . need I say more.

Last but not least there are the limatations of human endurence. Living alone with the fate of the universe at his finger tips is bound to tell on the man. he will grow nervous and jump from not sleeping nights, and from the constent fear of enemy agents. Until one morning the little boy who delivers the saterday evening post will knock on the door and the fear ridden man will leep to the little button and press it.

Doug A Seaman

Retort Press announces publication of *Prison Etiquette*: the Convict's Compendium of Useful Information, edited and with an introduction by Holley Cantine and Dachine Rainer. An anthology of the wartime writings of imprisoned conscientious objectors, the book has 150 pages and sells for \$2.50, direct from Retort Press, Bearsville, N. Y. The book will be given free to those who cannot afford the price and the publishers welcome contributions above the price to Retort Press Fund.

Also available from Retort Press is "An Illustrated Anarchist Calendar, 1950". The charge is whatever you think it's worth.



## PRISON DIARY

The days in quarantine—the first, the second, the rest—went very much the same . . .

The first thing we heard in the morning was a bugle sharply calling out reveille. (I envisioned a row of army tents, a row of soldiers, disgruntledly standing at attention.) Next there were sounds of keys—a key opening the quarantine door. There were sounds of a guard shuffling about inside the cell block, laying his brief case and keys on a table, hanging up his coat.

We stayed in our bunks, waited. We heard more jangling of keys, then a key turning the lock of a lever box. The door squeaked as it opened. I imagined the guard peering into the box to see that all the dials and levers were “just right.” He took ahold of a lever; the long steel arms above our doors scraped, fell into place. The moment was near . . .

—A shrilling piercing whistle. It entered every cell, filled the void between the opposite tiers. The echoes of the shrill died out, leaving the cell block cold and hollow. A curt command: EVERYBODY UP! Our cell doors slid open simultaneously. Like everyone else I looked through my open door at the tiers of cells across the way. Everyone was getting up.

We didn't want to get up, but we did. Why? We didn't know. . . . We just got up. Behind me and behind every man hung one vague doubt: if we didn't do what we were told, what would they do to us? There was the “hole;” various stories and descriptions of it were going the rounds. If the authorities put us in the hole, in solitary, for a couple of months, would we be able to take it?

There was this big question mark. So — everyone got up, everyone did as he was told.

When the guard said, “O.K. boys, let's mop up,” we mopped up. If the guard said, “Let's clean the brass,” we cleaned the brass; it made no difference if the brass was clean and we felt it could be made no cleaner. If the guard said “O.K., line up,” we lined up. That's all there was to it. Dictatorially prisons are run; by threat the men are ruled.

The only thing that kept each individual, including myself, from feeling completely stupid and ridiculous was that he saw everyone doing the same and obeying the same as he did.

When we went to eat we were made to line up to get our food, told where and how to sit down. After breakfast, which was very poor, we were sent out to work on the yard gang. The yard was the square that the surrounding dull-yellow buildings enclosed. The prison had no walls as such—the smooth-faced buildings were themselves the walls; they looked high and unclimbable.

Danbury was only a few months old. The yard was a good deal the way the construction company had left it, barren and bleak; uneven broken mounds of yellow clay.

The yard gang was already at work. The yard boss, a tall sturdy guard, dryly motioned us over to a pile of wellworn picks and shovels. We were lined up, told what to do. Very shortly the other prisoners informed me that picking was, for the most part, “just to keep us busy.”

As I went through the motions of working, following the mind and wishes of the guard, I struggled with my emotions. I wanted to use my time constructively. I disliked being pushed around but I decided to say nothing for awhile—maybe something would happen. At times it felt as though my growing disgust was going to rise out of my stomach and speak of itself.

We picked till noon. We were taken to eat. We picked all afternoon till 4:30, then we were, with the rest of the prison, locked up and counted. Shortly after the count we were given food again. The rest of the evening and the night we were kept in quarantine.

Each day the prison's dictatorial regimentation was grinding into me more and more. We weren't supposed to think, just supposed to do and obey. Each command was a threat—we did as told, or else!

After breakfast on the fifth day I was given a new assignment. They didn't ask me, just told me—“Go with the guard there.” It was assumed I would go.

I went, said nothing. . . . Inside me was a rising feeling I could hardly suppress. With some other prisoners I followed the guard across the yard. I was completely disgusted with myself for obeying. I knew as I followed the guard that sooner or later I would have to balk at being dictated to.

I looked ahead at the walk. Twenty feet forward was a spot. I looked at the spot, and I knew I was going to stop. I grew warm all over. I felt a gathering of my loose emotions. I reached the spot, stopped.

The guard and the other prisoners reached the green door they were headed for. The guard turned, counted his men. He noticed me standing in the walk about forty feet back.

“Hey, you!” he yelled, “Come on!” I said nothing. “Hey!” he yelled, “What's the matter?” He waited a bit then walked towards me. “What's the matter?”

“I can't go any farther.”

“What do you mean?”

“I won't go any farther.”

He broke in: “You mean you refuse to work?”

“You can call it whatever you want, I don't care. . . . It's just . . . I want to have some say how my own life is to be run. I'm tired of being dictated to.”

He acted as though he didn't hear me. “Are you coming along?”

“No.”

“Well, we'll see about that.”

He took me over to a cell house in the corner of the yard. I wondered what was going to happen, but I didn't particularly care. With another guard, he marched me up past three tiers of barred cells, locked me in a top cell.

The burning growl inside of me was gone. I had opposed what I thought wrong. For the first time in a month I felt sure and collected.

*This is reprinted from A FIELD OF BROKEN STONES, which was smuggled out of prison by the authors, Lowell Naeve and David Wieck With an introduction by Paul Goodman, 53 line-drawings, 240 pages, cloth-bound, the book can be obtained for \$3.00 from Libertarian Press Box A, Glen Gardner, N. J.*



## SMOKE ABC'S

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The levelling of authority and the sharing of both executive and routine tasks are two important ways to foster the self-development of all members of a concern. But the problem runs deeper. Besides the separation of hand from brain, of planners from doers, there is the separation of our daily work from our daily living. Our work tends to be meaningless activity in which we would take little interest except for the fact that it provides us cash. Correspondingly, the articles of our daily living are items in whose production we have had no self-expression. They are articles that have been made by someone else (who is probably also turning them out without love, simply for pay) and which come to us solely because we have the cash to command them.

In other words we sell our minds, our bodies, and the creative hours of our day in return for the cash with which to buy things that have been made by others who are similarly prostituting themselves. No wonder the "highest standard of living in the world" brings us so much glitter and gluttony, so little beauty and self-satisfaction. No wonder we have so little independence in any area of life. It would be surprising if we could surrender our initiative during the eight hours a day we are working and then recapture it after working hours.

We must insist on the social usefulness of our work. We would not knowingly accept a job of eating bodily poisons every day, just because the job paid well. It is equally disastrous to our emotional lives to spend eight hours a day doing socially harmful work — or even work that is uninteresting and socially useless. Oftentimes eight or ten friends will get together and complain of the work they are compelled to do at their jobs. These same persons could make at least a beginning at remedying things by forming a worker's cooperative to utilize their respective talents in useful, expressive work.

Another way to approach the same goal is by broadening the scope of our unions. As an example, consider men whose trades are connected with building. It is desirable that they should have a union in which to fight together for adequate pay, suitable safety precautions, vacations, etc. But if the fight stops there, their biggest gains are still going to leave them frustrated and

unfulfilled. The union should insist that more of their labor go to low-cost slum clearance housing and less (or none) to luxury building. Gradually, of course, as the union took over more and more of the functions now monopolized by owners and managers, it could become a "workers' cooperative", free from bosses.

There is not space to discuss now the parallel development of recapturing a creative relationship to the things we use in our daily lives — instead of assuming that all our material needs can be fulfilled by cash purchases. But it should be made clear that we can learn to grow more of the things we eat and to make or repair more of the things we use without seeking that complete self-sufficiency whereby certain cultists try to make or grow *everything* they use. This latter attempt amounts to a reactionary turning away from the natural interdependence of human beings into a misguided preoccupation with one's own omnipotence. You don't have to repudiate modern methods of transportation just because you realize the unhealthiness of a life in which persons never walk except to the garage or subway. Similarly, we can value countless products of modern industry while also avoiding that common parasitism (especially dominant in large cities) whereby many moderns are unable to use their hands at all, except in the one skill required by their jobs.

David Dellinger

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## Pardon Us, But -

We don't want to embarrass anyone but most of you who read this have not contributed to ALTERNATIVE during the past year. Perhaps this is partly our fault because we have not made many financial appeals. But in case you have any doubts about it, we *do* need money.

We don't want anyone to miss ALTERNATIVE simply for financial reasons. So if you want to keep receiving it but can't afford to contribute just now, that's all right.

But if you *can* afford it and have just been delaying, please run, walk, or crawl to the nearest mail box with a check, money-order, dollar-bill, coin, or postage stamp.

*Send all contributions to Irving Ravin, Treasurer, Box 827, Church St. Station, New York 8.*

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